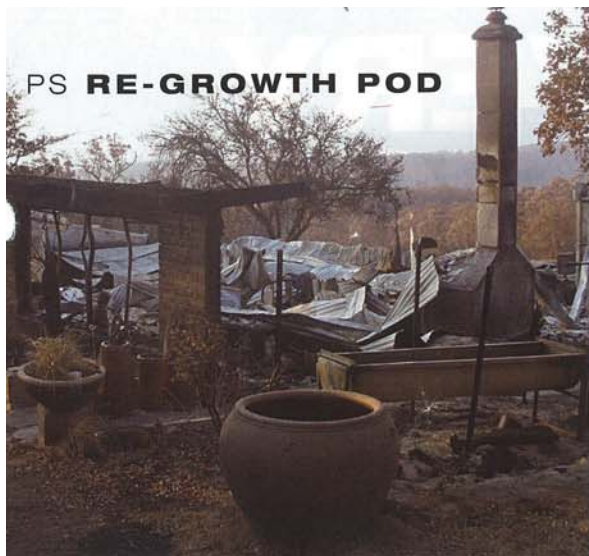


PS RE-GROWTH POD



Images courtesy 1:1 Architects

COVER CROP

Across the scorched earth of the Victorian bushfires, architects cultivate the seeds of regrowth that heal the wounds of Black Saturday. **Story by Mark Scruby**

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT for a city dweller, untouched by the tragedy of bushfire, to write about Black Saturday with any credibility. Safely sealed in air-conditioned homes, some ventured out only to discover what 46.7°C actually feels like (oven door open, set to max, fan on). Many Australians spent the week or two that followed swallowing madly to suppress a rising lump in the throat. But the media circus eventually packed up and rolled out of Kinglake, Marysville and Narbethong. The football season started. Life moved on.

For many, it wasn't so easy to move on. People lost loved ones, lost houses, lost the basic foundations of day-to-day life. Juliet Moore, director of 1:1 Architects, was rescued from her Kinglake West home by helicopter. She lost eleven of her close neighbours.

The Melbourne-based practice swung into action almost immediately, conceiving, in a matter of days, the House re-Growth Pod – a fully contained, prefabricated single-bedroom dwelling designed both as short-term accommodation and as a permanent structure around which a fully fledged home can be built. Concrete slabs are moulded off-site, complete with penetrations and cavities for services, and the outer shells are assembled. Then kitchen and bathroom fittings are installed,

and the pods are ready to be transported (two fit neatly on the back of a standard semi-trailer). Once on site, the pods can be connected to services almost immediately.

The prototype, produced with the help of a raft of suppliers and contractors, is now the Kinglake home of Stoney and Jacqueline Black and family. Meanwhile, an international design competition has generated some inspired ideas for transforming the pod into a fully fledged house suitable for bushfire-prone areas, and 1:1 is working on several alternative applications for the pod, including its use as a partially submerged library and an eco-retreat.

That Black Saturday media circus made an industry out of hackneyed clichés, but clichés are clichés because they're true. Looking at 1:1 Architects' economical pod design, and thinking of all the time and effort they've put into this project, you can't help but wonder at the strength and generosity of the human spirit. **H**